

Gorge Gazette

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and Streams

(Footbridges over the stream are numbered from 1 – 6 going downstream, excluding the old bridge off the side of Wightwick's Field).

Abbreviations:

WCC Wellington City Council

TPG Trelissick Park Group

OWBT Otari Wilton's Bush Trust.

GW Greater Wellington Regional Council

Website: www.trelissickpark.org.nz. (includes past Gorge Gazettes)

Facebook <https://www.Facebook.com/TrelissickParkGroup> (you do not need to be a member to look).

SEPTEMBER 2015



"Still glides the Stream and shall for ever glide;". So said Wordsworth¹.

Our 'gliding' example, as shown, is the Korimako Stream. And last January, Bill Hester took a video in the canyon section of the Kaiwharawhara further down-valley - see http://youtu.be/XP_RZ0L8jig

Occasionally, a feisty side comes to the fore. We gaze in awe at the angry torrent, as stream banks get torn away. Recently all was transformed to an evil looking silty greyness from a ruptured sewer pipe. We also get soapy episodes because people love washing their cars on the street.

The saving grace is that such feistiness is short-lived. Invertebrates and native fish cling to life.

Myfanwy Emeny of WCC organised an interpretive board describing the life of the endangered longfin eel, found in our streams. It is worth having a look, easily accessible by walking down the vehicle track from the lay-by half way up the Ngaio Gorge Road. It is just upstream of the debris trap. The art-work, by Tony Stoddard, is superb. For a photo and the written material, see Appendix.

More on our fish is in the March 2012 and April 2013 Gorge Gazettes, via our website.

Not to be Missed

Viewers of the eel sign have a unique opportunity to see what appears to be evergreen buckthorn, beside the vehicle track a few metres upstream on the right. This can grow up to 10 m tall, is very bushy and almost looks like a native. It produces a mass of dark red berries from October to January. It can invade native bush, forming dense stands, to dominate native ecosystems. Be quick: Its days are numbered.

Friend or Foe?

Trelissick Park is a wonderful resource for anyone studying weeds. In this era of botanical purity, anything but endemic natives is not welcome. Tree lucerne (*Chamaecytisus proliferus*) is regarded in some quarters as an invasive weed. Most of ours lie





alongside open areas of the lower Kaiwharawhara Stream and on the railway corridor. It flowers in winter/early spring, so the birds are delighted - especially kereru. At such a time of scarcity, it's a 'life saver'. It does not seem particularly invasive yet. Birds have priority!

A Fantail and Tui Nesting Study

Nyree Fea, who is doing a PhD at Victoria University, gave a presentation at our last meeting about her intensive monitoring of tui and fantails in Wellington City to study outcomes in relation to pest-mammal abundance. She also showed videos of fantails feeding chicks on the nest and a rat leaving that nest after eating a chick. She wants everyone to look for tui and

fantail nests so that she can add them to her monitoring, which will be from August to March 2015 - 2017. Her contact details are 022 120 7237 and NyreeFea@vuw.ac.nz. More details are on our Facebook page (21 July).

She says " In the last fantail breeding season (December 2014 - Feb 2015) I found 9 of my 25 fantail nests in Trelissick Park, this was the highest of all five reserves I sampled. It seems to be a favoured site for nesting fantails, perhaps because of the healthy stream and the general quality of the habitat. Of these nine, only one failure was attributed to pest-mammals, namely rats. One was abandoned by the nesting adult and the rest successfully fledged young.

"I also conducted a rodent monitor in Trelissick Park in February this year, using inked tracking tunnels. These were placed out for one fine night with peanut butter as a bait to entice rodents to enter the tunnel and leave their footprints behind. I found 25% tracking which is pretty low for an urban reserve. Well done to your team of volunteers that have helped keep the Trelissick Park in good shape for the native wildlife!"

It all Started with Boneseed

A query about boneseed from someone trawling our website made us realise that our 'Weeds' page was obsolete. One thing led to another. Thanks to Bill Hester, now we have radical transformations:

- Adopt-a-spot guidelines (within the 'Projects' page), full of useful information on weeding and planting techniques, which apply for working bees as well.
- A new page called 'Plantings' listing numbers/species/experience since 1991, including some photos.
- A completely revamped 'Weeds' page, in priority order, with photos of each – based on experience over the years.
- The 'Management Plan' page with the Suburban Reserves Management Plan replacing the 1995 Trelissick Park Management Plan. We have retained 5 of the 1995 sections for more information and historical value.
- A complete re-write of Health and Safety Information for Volunteers (within the 'Projects page) - spurred by an excellent 'In Safe Hands Toolkit' from a Conservation Volunteers New Zealand workshop, which Peter Reimann attended.

Down in the Park

The planting score is just shy of 500, helped by our regular working bees, children from St Benedict's School and IT company Silverstripe. Bill Hester has various photos on our Facebook page. Mike Lear, Jonathan Kennett and Peter Reimann, blessed with high reach and degrees of agility, installed most of WCC's epiphytes (*Collospermum hastatum*) in the forks of old trees. Treescape had a crew for four days cutting wattle and planting 100 natives along the railway corridor.

Working on weeds in the original forest remnant below Ngaio Gorge Road to the musical backdrop of tui, kaka and bellbird is like a religious experience. Soon we will have to declare war on the karaka seedling profusions there. Autumn splashes of colour allowed Bill Hester to tackle sycamore.

10 BNZ staff on their 'Closed for Good Day' achieved miracles in the disaster areas upstream from bridge 6, unclothing slopes of wandering willie and karaka, planting trees, fixing the track and clearing a patch on

railway land ready for planting next year. Does anyone know of Oser Galler, who died in 1978? We found his plaque. Investigations are underway...

Knowledge Springs from Ignorance

Wondering where he lies on that spectrum, Peter Reimann gave a talk on growing native plants to the Wadestown Wilton Horticultural Society, and wrote an article for the *Indigena* magazine on planting native species in Trelissick Park. This magazine represents the Indigenous Forest Section of the Farm Forestry Association.

References

1. William Wordsworth. *Sonnets from The River Duddon: After Thought*.

Contacts

Chairman & working bees: Peter Reimann (04) 938 9602, peter.reimann@paradise.net.nz
Wellington City Council (reporting slips and fallen trees across tracks, other problems): (04) 499 4444
Greater Wellington pollution hotline: 0800 496 734

Working Bees

Usually 1st Sunday of the month at 1.30 PM and 2nd Tuesday at 9.30 AM. See website for details.

The Gorge Gazette

Compiled by Peter Reimann about every 4 months - all contributions and suggestions gratefully received.

APPENDIX

The Sign for Eels



Text on the interpretive board for eels just upstream of the debris trap

"The longfin eel [Tuna Kuwharuwharu] lived in New Zealand for 80 million years. It is our top freshwater predator and probably the biggest eel in the world. Some females grow 2 m in length and weigh up to 40 kg. The oldest eel found was 106 years old.

"Eels come out at night to feed on insects, snails, koura and small birds. Eels need to eat and have a home the same as humans. If an eel gets stropy around your legs it probably means you are plodding around in its territory.

"Eels spend their lives in rivers, streams and lakes before swimming to the sea to breed. When they are fully ready to go (which might take 80 years) their eyes grow to see through the deep dark sea water. They

store fat, stop eating and then swim for five or six months to tropical Pacific waters. The adults die after breeding, but the young float on currents all the way back to New Zealand streams.

"The special place of the eel is maintained in Māori culture through the stories contained in tribal histories.

"Images of eels appear in carvings on meeting houses beside tribal ancestors, which is a mark of their importance to Māori. Our eels face polluted water, destruction of habitat and being taken for food. You can help our eels by not catching them and not letting pollutants enter drains and waterways.

If you see a big longfin just watch it and marvel at what it represents. The fact that you have seen it means that it has not migrated to breed. If we keep taking big eels from our streams we put at risk the survival of the whole species. They are intelligent, interesting and gentle animals - and well worth protecting."

Other notes on the board:

"Rows of sensors on an eel's head help the eel detect water movement and find its prey.

"Eels are able to detect blood in the water from 100 m away.

"Average length 1.2 m.

"Eels absorb oxygen through their skin - on moist nights they can travel over land.

"Eels don't migrate to breed until they are 20 - 60 years old, then they embark on a 6,000 km journey across the ocean.

"Eels exude a slime when stressed or travelling over land."